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Annual address...president
Richard Henry Dana...

New York

1922

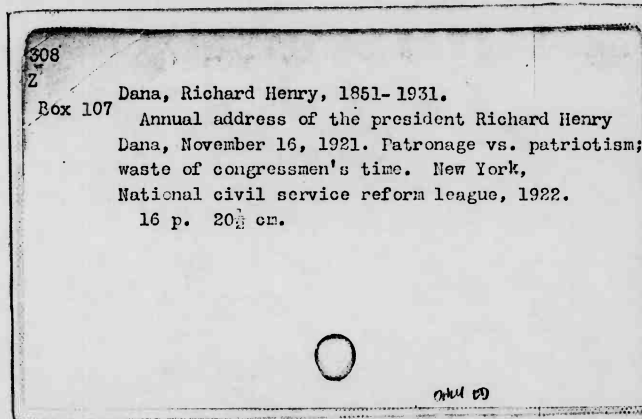
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DATE FILMED: 3-4-97

INITIALS: PB

TRACKING #: 22336

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Through the President's Office

Annual Address
of the President
RICHARD HENRY DANA

November 16, 1921

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Box 107

Patronage vs. Patriotism
Waste of Congressmen's Time

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NATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE REFORM LEAGUE
8 West 40th Street
New York City

Forty-first Annual Meeting
Detroit, Michigan
November 16, 1921

C/S may 21, 1922
Net

PATRONAGE VS. PATRIOTISM AND WASTE OF CONGRESSMEN'S TIME.

Among the important factors tending to retard business recovery is the delay in Congress of final action on the income tax and tariff bills. Until those are settled no business concern can tell what will be its burden of taxation, what will be the cost of raw material, or the chance of profit. The same considerations retard investments. All these in turn keep back production and increase unemployment. There are also many other matters pressing upon the attention of Congress, of great importance for recovering our prosperity which also receive but tardy attention.

Time of Congressmen and Postmaster General Given to Patronage.

Anyone imagining that members of Congress are busy with their legislative duties and give all their time, except what is reasonably necessary for social recreation, physical exercise and sleep, would have his eyes opened had he gone with the committee of the National Civil Service Reform League to interview the Postmaster General in his office on the subject of the appointment of presidential postmasters. The outer office "was crowded with congressmen, delegations from various sections, and others." What were these congressmen there for? Were they helping to expedite the mails? No. Their object was to secure the appointment of some one of the three eligibles standing highest as the result of the competitive inquiries into education, training, experience, and business ability of the various candidates for presidential postmasterships. That, however, is not the only matter that is taking the congressmen away from their legislative duties. The congressmen admit that they have a hand and an almost irresistible one, too, in the promotion of employes in the vast civil service of the country; not that there is any pretense that these gentlemen go into the departments to measure the relative fitness of employes for such promotion; no, they are seeking promotion

for their friends, male and female, or for the friends of their constituents and political supporters at home.

Beside the presidential postmasterships there are large numbers of other positions including many thousands that were exempted from the civil service law during the last eight years and still others which have never been included under the merit system, some 200,000 or more, whose appointment is still a matter of Congressional patronage.

Now, how much of the time of members of Congress of the party in power is taken up with these matters of patronage? Is it a trivial or a very considerable amount of time? In an address at Williams College, General Garfield, afterwards President of the United States, and whose opinion was based upon long congressional experience, said:

"One-third of the working hours of senators and representatives is hardly sufficient to meet the demands made upon them in reference to appointments for office."

Since then a number of places have been withdrawn from congressional patronage by the civil service law. A committee of the League, after some 30,000 of these had so been withdrawn, made an investigation into this subject. They addressed letters to the Republican Congressmen, the Republican party being then in power. Some twenty-four answered quite fully, and, taking their answers altogether, it appeared that just about one-third of the working time of themselves and their secretaries (who are paid out of the public purse) was devoted to the scrambles for office.

Now, it is true that still more places have been withdrawn from congressional patronage by the extensions of the civil service law; but, at the same time, the service has grown so vastly that the number of offices at the practical disposal of congressmen is quite as great as the total civil service when General Garfield spoke at Williamstown. When one considers that it costs many thousands of dollars an hour to run Congress, the waste in money, as well as the loss of time to consider important measures is worth careful pondering, while the latter explains to a great degree the large number of bills which never come before Congress, or are never finally acted upon if they ever get upon the floor of either branch.

Is it not worth while for both the laborers who suffer from unemployment and the business interests whose activities are

in suspension, to join in a protest against this squandering of the precious time, thought, and energies of our national legislators? A mere protest, however, would be ineffective, unless it is followed up with a diminution of the congressional patronage by further extensions of the civil service system.

Hays Making Gallant Fight.

To come back to the question of the appointment of presidential postmasters and the crowding of the outer room of the Postmaster General, let me state that Postmaster General Hays is making a gallant fight to prevent the appointments becoming political, but this fight, however brave and successful, takes an enormous amount of his time and thought from the organization of the biggest business, but one of the worst organized of its kind, in the world, and, what is more, this fight is wholly unnecessary. Under the previous executive order the Postmaster General was to send to the President the name of the one person standing highest on the eligible list for each office. This prevented any contention or political intrigue or interference by congressmen with regard to these appointments. President Harding, however, on issuing his new order and against the advice, not only of our League, but of several influential congressmen, changed the appointment from the highest to one of the highest three. This change immediately opened the Postmaster General's door to insistent congressmen.

Not only has that been done. The three names for each vacancy are submitted to Republican members of Congress, so they receive an invitation to enter this door, and when they enter they begin the struggle to secure the appointment of the one of the three that they think would be most useful to them in the light of their political ambitions. The Postmaster General then resists the pressure of these invited guests and stands out for appointing the one highest on the list, unless good reasons are given him to show that someone else would be a more efficient postmaster. Let us remark here in passing that the Postmaster General has not the opportunity to investigate, either himself or through anybody else, the *ex parte* and very biased information that is furnished him by these members of Congress. So far about 76% of the appointments have been from those standing highest. The Postmaster General deserves credit for his energy and persistency in bringing about a result at least partially satisfactory.

Three Names Not Necessary.

Now, let us examine a little into this question of sending three names. One of the reasons given out is that in the examinations for all minor positions in the Federal civil service, three names are sent to fill a vacancy, with the right of selection. This was necessitated by the Constitution of the United States, which gave the appointment to the President or to his cabinet officers in so many cases, and the appointment, so the courts have ruled, must, in order to be an "appointment," allow for some choice. In England, which has been the model for our civil service reform measures, the highest one alone must be taken; so for the civil service of the State of Illinois, the City of Chicago, and Cook County, and also of Detroit, Michigan.

The order of the President of the United States is an executive order; it is a self-denying ordinance and he has a constitutional right to direct the Postmaster General to send him the highest name if he so wishes. And as to minor positions, so embarrassing, time-wasting, and futile have been the struggles between the various candidates at the head of the eligible lists, that in almost all the larger postoffices and custom houses of the United States, orders have been issued that the highest names only shall be taken.

Some years ago Mayor Gaynor of New York issued an executive order for the civil service of that city which has been continued up to the present date, requiring the selection of the highest one, and these rules and executive orders have entirely eliminated the political pulling and hauling which previously existed over the three eligibles. In those large offices where the rule of one prevails, far more than 76% of the persons standing highest, often 99% or 100%, receive the appointments.

Another objection to the rule of three and submitting these names to members of Congress, is that it deters many efficient Democrats and even Republicans without political support from entering the examinations. It hardly seems worth their while when Republican congressmen have any say in the selection. Under Section 10 of the civil service law it is forbidden that recommendations from members of Congress should be received, for anything except "residence and character." These post-offices, to be sure, are not under the strict civil service law, but the principle of that law, it seems to us, should prevail, while, as a matter of fact, in these conferences within the doors

of the Postmaster General, relative fitness is considered as well as "character and residence."

The record of political influence would be incomplete if we stopped here. We must add the words of President Harding on this subject, which have gone all over the country. The words were uttered before a committee of postmasters and postal employees in October, 1921. They are as follows:

"I want to say that I am not averse to postmasters being interested in politics. If any one ever comes to me and says he is seeking a postmastership and has no party affiliation, he is going to be wiped off the slate right away. I'd rather have a hard-boiled Democrat than a yellow Republican."

In addition to these words, President Harding gave as his reason for changing the rule of one to one in three that he had been urged to so fix the Executive Order that only Republicans should be made postmasters.

A Change of Administration.

There is a still further consideration. Postmaster General Hays, by his personal effort, is keeping out a considerable amount of politics, but should a change of administration take place, especially if it should be a change of party, this very rule of three would be taken advantage of, should human nature remain as it has been in the past, to get rid of Republicans and put in Democrats.

We, therefore, strongly appeal to the President of the United States, in order to save the time of his Postmaster General and congressmen, to eliminate what little politics still gets past Mr. Hays, and for the sake of giving careers of employment, to change his order to the rule of one. We also strongly urge that Congress pass an act to put the presidential postmasters permanently under the merit system and when done, that the President should follow this law up with an executive order directing the Postmaster General always to take the highest one, thus putting that service on a stable basis of capacity and experience, economy and efficiency.

Some High Positions.

On September 3d last President Harding wrote a letter to the Surveyor General of the United States Land Office in the Utah District. In it he says:

"We are anxious to have men in the positions of responsibility who are in full sympathy with the purposes and plans of the adminis-

tration. I need not tell you of the current demand for the recognition of aspirants within our party for consideration in the matter of patronage. I take you to be a practical man who knows of these developments with the sweeping change in the national administration."

and goes on to ask for the voluntary resignation of this gentleman. In reply the Surveyor General said in substance that there was not a Democratic as opposed to a Republican way of surveying the land and that no public policy was left to him to determine under the strict acts of Congress under which that work is done. There are many other positions for which deserving Republicans are seeking appointment and for which there is a current demand for the recognition of aspirants within the Republican party. We, therefore, strongly recommend that the President issue an executive order for the selection of Surveyors General, Collectors of Customs and Internal Revenue, United States Marshals, and the like, and to make that order as complete as we think the order for the selection of presidential postmasters should be made. We recommend further that Congress pass acts putting these positions, as well as the postmasterships, under the merit system, with the attendant benefits of ability, continuity of service, and of life careers for those who are seeking these higher positions whether by promotion or by original entry into the service.

There is also another class of officers that should be included in the merit system and that is the under secretaries of the big departments in Washington. In other countries these are permanent appointments held by men of large ability and experience, but with us they are almost all of them changed with each change of administration, not only change of party but of different factions within the party. There are one or two shining exceptions which only go to prove the rule, like that of Mr. Adees in the State Department, but generally each new administration is hampered by having no one who is fully conversant with the experience, administrative policies, and actual state of the public business or the claims against the government. It always has to be learned afresh each four or eight years, and meanwhile the incumbents are politicians looking for party success rather than experts seeking the best service for the benefit of all. These extensions have had the endorsements of presidents of the United States and been recommended by the Taft Efficiency Commission.

Examination for High Positions Practical.

Now, when I speak of filling higher positions requiring executive and organizing ability through the civil service and am talking with a friend, I see a look of incredulity come over his face. The subject is changed as if I had shown a senseless obsession but a great discovery was made some twenty years ago, and that was this—that through a modification of the older civil service system the possession of executive and organizing ability as well as of sufficient education and training could be ascertained. The way this was done is just the way in which a president of a great railroad would ascertain the possession of these qualifications in looking for a department head. It is, in fact, an inquiry into the life careers of the applicants. In such cases all scholastic questions and answers are jettisoned. A questionnaire is addressed to each candidate at his home or office. These are filled out and returned and as to all those who have thus shown anything like enough capacity, questionnaires addressed to the persons who have employed them and who know about their character, personal qualifications, executive ability, and power to get on with and handle men, and also in order to check up the candidates' statements. This information is then graded by experts of the same professions, who readily give their services for a mere nominal compensation to aid the government in securing the best results. A thousand or more of important positions with large salaries and much responsibility have been successfully filled in this way.

This furnishes the key to governmental efficiency, does it not? In our municipalities, where there is so much waste and extravagance and where contracts are so eminently in politics, the remedy suggested is to have permanent experts to carry out the administrative details of the general public policies decided upon by the elective officers. For example, the city council decides that certain highways shall be built, or sewers shall be laid, but the building is left to permanent municipal experts to carry out. The question next arises, How shall these experts be selected? Our answer, which is the only practical one, is, through the modern discovery of these inquiries into life careers. They are called in the National Civil Service Commission's office "unassembled examinations." The word "unassembled" is appropriate because the candidates do not come

together in the same places, as do clerks and the like who have to answer the ordinary educational questions; but the word "examination" seems unfortunate and misleading, as it is so associated in the public mind with examinations for school and college, while this new system is on a wholly different and an eminently sensible basis.

In the great cities of England, Germany and in Paris, France, as all students of government agree, the success and economy of administration is obtained through such permanent boards of experts who are wholly out of politics. They also give their advice when requested, as they often are, by the policy-determining officials. The only city in this country where this plan has thoroughly been carried out, so as to include the very heads of departments, is Los Angeles and there contracts are taken out of politics, continuity of policy is maintained, economy and efficiency are secured, and complete harmony of operation exists. In the other cities where experts are often obtained through the modern methods these experts are mere assistants to the heads of departments. The department heads are political and control contracts and administrative policies, so we do not get the full benefit, indeed hardly any of the advantages of expert management.

The Federal Service in Need of Attention.

Herbert Hoover, the Secretary of Commerce of the United States, a firm believer in the principles of civil service reform, in an address as president of the American Institute of Mining Engineers, stated that the public service must always mean "ultimate inefficiency that would arise from the deadening paralysis of bureaucracy" and that there must be the ever present political pressure in appointments. That opinion, as far as it concerned present conditions, is strongly backed up by the official report of the Congressional Joint Commission, which after more than a year's investigation, reported on March 12, 1920:

"The United States, the largest employer in the world, is without a central employment agency having adequate powers; in short, without an employment policy" and that this "has produced most glaring inequalities and incongruities in salary schedules, payroll titles and departmental organization, with much resultant injustice, dissatisfaction, inefficiency and

waste;" that "the various departments of the government show a lack of co-ordination within and between various units, resulting in apparent duplication of work and supernumerary employees"; that promotion is not properly regulated and that there should be more removals of the inefficient, and only if these things be done "can the service be kept free from deadwood and the highest standards of efficiency maintained."

As to Mr. Hoover's belief that the public service must always mean this kind of paralyzing bureaucracy, we believe he is mistaken and that there is a sure remedy, as complete as can be looked for in any human affair.

What is the remedy and how should it be brought about? It should be brought about, as the Congressional Joint Commission suggests and as we have long contended, by the use of employment experts and efficiency engineers. Under whose authority should these experts act? It is suggested that they should be under the control of the civil service commission because that body, as the report says, "must examine into the nature of each position and special qualification requirements as part of its work in determining the fitness of applicants to perform the required duties."

The League's Bill.

There is a bill now before Congress drawn by the League, based upon the reports of this Congressional Joint Commission and adequate, we believe, to secure these much desired improvements, and we seek its enactment, and appeal for public support to bring this about.

But what of the cost in these hard times? The cost of the United States Civil Service Commission is only a trifle over one-tenth of one per cent of the salaries of the civil service of the federal government and it was officially estimated by Secretary Windham, who was Secretary of the Treasury both before and after the civil service law was passed, that the merit system saved one-third of the expense of the departments in Washington. This is an illustration of the relatively small cost in comparison to increased efficiency through entrance tests alone. In the City of Chicago and Cook County, Illinois, this very system of efficiency experts under the civil service commission was tried. For the city it began with the appropriation of \$27,000 a year and in Cook County of about \$10,000

and it was clearly shown that that saved \$5,000,000 a year and the public work was better done. So there is no net cost at all but a huge saving.

Unfortunately, Mayor Thompson of Chicago has lately put in a subservient civil service commission and incompetent employment experts, so that today the service is falling back from what it was during the first few years of this reform, but the experiment has shown what can be done. When one considers that the total salary budget for civil servants of the national government alone is \$700,000,000 a year and that it is estimated to be some three billions of dollars a year for Nation, state, city, and county one can see how enormous any substantial per cent of saving would be in taxes; and the per cent based on the Chicago experience, to be as much as one-quarter of this huge total. And beyond that saving, every taxpayer would feel a satisfaction in seeing that however large the tax bills may be, the money is wisely and economically spent for the benefit of all the citizens of the country.

Our Program.

So far, then, our program includes expert management of government business, the taking of contracts out of politics, the general improvement in public affairs that would come by abolishing those inducements that bring into public life those who enter it for what they can get out of it; and the increase of efficiency among the subordinates and the "deadly bureaucracy" brought into living activity.

The unionism of government employees has been increasing. It is now claimed that 75% are now in unions. The reason for this is that there is no practical way to get just complaints considered excepting through unionism and the ultimate threat of strike. Under our bill the employment experts are to hear and suggest adjustments of grievances. This, it is admitted, would do away with the need of the strike threat.

When one considers all that our program means, it is hard to understand why the thoughtful citizens and influential business men do not take hold of civil service reform with real zest. We find it is generally considered as something well enough in its way, something like Sunday School, but not worth any special thought or endeavor.

In asking why this is so, the usual replies have been that the average business man does not use civil service methods in

selecting his own employees; he believes he can do better when allowing himself a free choice, and that after all it is only a matter affecting clerkships, bookkeepers, copyists, and the like. We have just shown that it means a great deal more than the latter, but in addition our answer to the average business man is something like this: That in his business he has a pocket nerve which is wholly lacking in government employment. Those responsible for the public work have not got to show dividends to their stockholders and they have no financial interest in the business beyond that of drawing a stated salary.

Again, we doubt whether the business men always get as good service as they can. We all of us have seen many an office in which the stenographer or typist is not nearly as efficient as might have been obtained for the same salary, had open competition been applied; but, moreover, the government business is enormous and most of the business men who talk about free selection of their own employees, have but a small number of persons working under them. Where the number is large the lack of thorough tests in "hiring and firing" has resulted in an overturn which is surprisingly great. Where entrance tests have been adopted that overturn has immensely diminished, often resulting in profit where there had formerly been a loss, and many and many an enormous concern has taken a leaf from the civil service reformer's book and is now successfully applying civil service reform tests to the selection of employees; while, on the other hand, the plan of employment experts and efficiency engineers now used by many business concerns to improve their establishments, has given the hint to civil service reformers and has been applied, as shown in the Chicago instance, to the public service.

But there is still another consideration. Very few people have any idea of how varied are the kinds of work done by the government in modern times. There is the care of all the wards of the State, not only of criminals in prisons and reformatories (which is often deform rather than reform), orphans, insane, and epileptics, the maintenance of dispensaries, the inspection of public health and food and water supplies and weights and measures and of the health, eyesight, hearing and surrounding conditions of our school children, help in maternity cases, visiting nursing, and the establishing and maintaining of great public hospitals and the like, not only are economy

and efficiency required in such work but the work itself fails to produce the results that were anticipated where politics are allowed to enter into the appointment of those responsible for these great public, beneficent institutions.

Prohibition Enforcement.

Again, we have the glaring example of the poor enforcement of prohibition in the use and manufacture of intoxicating liquors. The appointments of the agents are specially exempted in the Volstead Act from the civil service law. These agents show a marked contrast to those enforcing the anti-drug law. In the latter bureau all the employees are selected by the civil service system, which, as Col. L. G. Nutt, the head of that work, says, enables him to execute the drug law effectively, and that he would not like to select his employees in any other manner.

It is sometimes thought that the cause of civil service reform and effective public work, is dry, cold and hard in comparison with that of philanthropy in general, but when we consider that the government is doing so much philanthropic work and doing it both badly and wastefully, does not an effort for better results appeal also to the heart as well as to the head?

With such a program, then; with so much at stake for the health and prosperity of the community and of the coming generation, and to save wanton waste as well and purify politics in general, why should not all the forces for good in our country band together and demand from our legislators, national and state, complete and thorough-going civil service reform systems such as are contained in our program, every detail of which is as necessary and as linked up with the whole as every part of the mechanism of a high-grade automobile. Each civil service reformer dreams of a government agency adequate to its tasks and at fair cost accomplishing vast community good.

"As of one who in a view
Sees what is to be, but is not."

To use the words of Longfellow is his Hiawatha.

Come, fellow countrymen, and enlist in this cause, and give us your support, both moral and financial, and what is more, your encouragement.

The Evils of Veteran Preference.

Yet, fellow citizens, this vision of public philanthropy and community welfare economically, wisely, and effectively done, as well as of efficiency in all other governmental work, is clouded over by the veteran preference movement. We, like other loyal citizens, wish to see the patriotism, self-sacrifice, devotion, and courage of our service men duly recognized and rewarded, but is not this particular method the most inappropriate, unfair, unpatriotic, and stupid way of rewarding these men that could be well devised? Is it not injuring the government of the country they so heroically fought to save? Let us see. The veterans of the World War and Spanish War ask for and have obtained in many jurisdictions, laws that give them an absolute preference in appointments under the civil service law over all others, regardless of relative capacity. These preferences apply not only to door-keepers, messengers, and park police, but to places requiring special training and education, and even scientific knowledge combined with experience in business. In this way veterans are appointed even though they show but the minimum of knowledge and training over others, not veterans, who are shown to be almost perfect in the civil service tests. These tests, remember too, are very practical and suited for each kind of office to be filled.

A 70% Man to Handle the Income Tax.

A recent example well illustrates this: The income tax department of the United States, which inspects returns covering billions of dollars each year, had to accept as accountants, to be employed in this kind of work, veterans who had received between 65 and 70%, while there were non-veterans who had to be passed over who had received between 90 and 100% in knowledge and experience. These absolute preferences are all in addition to the extra marks justly and properly given in the civil service examinations for war experience in discipline. These are given by the civil service commissioners whenever those qualifications are of value in the positions sought.

Not only in the entrance to the service, but in promotions, veterans demand and have obtained preferences so that no one not a veteran, no matter how much longer in office and how much more experienced and capable, can be promoted if there are enough veterans as there are in fact to fill all the higher places.

Rejoinder is made that many veterans are very capable. Yes, but the very capable do not need the preference. They can get in and secure promotion on their merits. The forced preference laws are for the benefit of the less capable.

But entrance and promotion are not the whole of the story. The veterans also demand and have in some places secured laws to prevent their removal for inefficiency or any other cause without a trial before a court, in which the department has the burden of proof, and this makes it about as hard to obtain a removal as to get a criminal conviction, and at the expense, the long delay and cost of the department.

The consequences of these preference provisions are fatal to the cause of capable administration in public office and the effectiveness of great undertakings for the public welfare, to say nothing of general economy.

Not a few of the veterans, we are glad to say, protest against this method.

Is there not a real danger, too, that the veteran seeking these special favors will be thought to have sold his patriotism for a mess of pottage, and to be deteriorating the administration of public affairs?

We, therefore, again appeal to the public-spirited men and women of the country, veterans included, to oppose any further extension of these veteran preferences and, if possible, to repeal or modify those already granted, and then when it is done, will there be a chance to secure, through the adoption of the program of the League, a public service that will be a pride to all our citizens, so that we may hold up our heads when we meet countrymen of other great civilized nations, as having a public service as good as, nay better than, that of any other country in the world.

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